DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 797 EA 022 326

AUTHOR Silberstein, Moshe; Sabar, Naama
TITLE Combining Centralized and Decentralized Curricular Approaches in the School Curriculum Structure: The Case of Autonomous Primary Schools in Israel.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 16-20, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Centralization; Core Curriculum; Course Descriptions; *Curriculum Design; *Curriculum Development; Curriculum Evaluation; *Decentralization; Elementary Secondary Education; Experimental Curriculum; Extracurricular Activities; Foreign Countries; *Instructional Design; *Instructional Development; Instructional Materials; Integrated Curriculum; Parent Participation; School Restructuring; Student Participation; Teacher Participation
IDENTIFIERS *Israel

ABSTRACT

Autonomous schools in Israel are faced with the challenge of integrating centralized and decentralized curricular approaches. The curriculum structure by which schools attempt to comply with national curricula standards and achieve school autonomy is examined. Case studies of three primary schools involved document analysis, observation, interviews with school staff, and a teacher survey. Four curriculum components are identified: basic skills subjects, separate subjects, integrated topics, and additional programs. A conclusion is that the school curriculum structure represents a genuine effort to combine contradictory educational orientations and curricular approaches. Recommendations to sustain this structure include: (1) development of a common educational philosophy shared by staff and administration; (2) institutionalization of the four curriculum components; (3) creation of a school ethos; and (4) development of a supportive social and organizational environment, especially principal support. Three tables and a glossary are included. (43 references) (LMI)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED324707

# COMBINING CENTRALIZED AND DECENTRALIZED CURRICULAR APPROACHES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM STRUCTURE: THE CASE OF AUTONOMOUS PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ISRAEL

Moshe Silberstein and Naama Sabar
Tel-Aviv University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

N. Sabar

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

# COMBINING CENTRALIZED AND DECENTRALIZED CURRICULAR APPROACHES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM STRUCTURE: THE CASE OF AUTONOMOUS PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ISRAEL

## Introduction

Starting from the late 70's a new policy was initiated in the Israeli Educational System, the stated end of which was to encourage schools toward more autonomy. Both secondary and primary schools took advantage of this officially supported policy (Friedman 1987, Gordon, 1987). In the secondary schools, teachers were encouraged to modify and adapt centrally developed curricula to their personal and local needs, to take more responsibility in assessing students' achievement, and to develop their own optional programs in certain non-core subject areas in the matriculation examinations (Tamir, 1986). On the primary school level the new trend had a more comprehensive impact, changing virtually the whole educational structure in schools identified as autonomous schools. These schools, comprising about 10 percent of the primary schools in the country, were ideologically and practically supported by a national project, the "active learning project' which had a pupil-centered orientation and an ideology resembling the ideology of the "open school" movement of the 60's and the 70's in England (Caspi, 1985; Harrison and Globman, 1982). During the 80's autonomous primary schools in Israel were intensively engaged in developing school-based curricula, thus changing the nature of Israeli primary schools, hitherto characterized by a centralized curriculum structure (Sabar, 1987).

Three main arguments favoring the shift toward a decentralized system were raised in the public debate accompanying these changes. One argument stressed the socio-cultural changes taking place in Israeli society, characterized by moving from a concept of national uniformity expressed by the "melting pot" metaphor, toward a democratic, pluralistic and multi-ethnic society, a development which by necessity shifted the emphasis toward increased local and community concerns. The second argument emphasized the enhanced professional status of the teachers, who in the 80's were more educated and experienced in curricular matters, and therefore more capable of taking professional responsibilities on their own. The third argument suggested that decentralization would put an end to the inefficiency of the complex bureaucratic organizations operated by the then existing centralized system (Report of the Special Group of the Pedagogical Secretariate of the Ministry of Education, 1984).

These arguments provide only a partial explanation for the increase in the number of autonomous primary schools in the 80's in Israel. This phenomenon can also be viewed as a corrective response to the weaknesses of the centralized educational system in which the main role of the schools in curricular matters was limited to the implementation of centrally based

decisions. Defining the autonomous school movement as a reactive phenomenon, we would expect educational thought and practice in these schools to move in the opposite direction, toward exercising full autonomy and manifesting full independence in curricular matters. Contrary to expectations, the officially stated policy of these schools (Caspi and Har-Zion, 1985) adopted a moderate position trying to capitalize on the virtues which both centralized and decentralized systems may offer in curriculum making.

By adopting a moderate version of the English model of the integrative school and by intending to maintain a balanced position which takes into consideration both national curriculum requirements as well as local needs and teacher autonomy, the policy makers of this movement tried to avoid an open confrontation with the established national curriculum (Caspi and Har-Zion, 198[illegible], 1989).

Curricular approaches represent underlying educational orientations

However, the confrontation between a centralized and a decentralized system of curriculum making represents a much deeper dispute between basic educational orientations, than appears at face level. The dispute ranges over substantial issues in education such as defining the role of schooling, the broad goals of education, the nature of the desired educational experience, the roles of the teachers, etc. The adherents of the two approaches usually anchor their theoretical arguments in the much-debated notions of "soft" vs. "hard" learning, "back to basics" vs. "progressive education", meritocratic vs. democratic educational goals, and values of "excellency" vs. values of equality (Sirotnik, 1988).

Schubert (1986, 1984), analyzing the state of the art of curriculum studies and using historical perspectives, defines three distinct schools of thought in education: 1) an intellectual/traditionalist orientation, emphasizing academic subjects and the acquisition of intellectual skills, b) a social/behaviorist orientation, defining schooling mainly as a process preparing pupils toward adult life and c) an experientialist orientation, suggesting pupil needs and spontaneous interests as the foundation of the curriculum. The first two orientations fit in well with a centralized mode of curriculum making while the third orientation is more likely to entail a school based curriculum.

Scholars such as Kliebard, Goodlad and Sarason described the tensions and conflicts arising from the contradictory implications of applying different educational orientations in the same school curriculum structure. Reforms in educational orientation always proved to be dependent on institutional changes and the creation of appropriate organizational structures and the social climate in the school (Kliebard , 1988; Goodlad, 1984; Sarason, 1982). Husen (1979) discusses the inherent conflict between the humanistic ideal of self-realization with child-centered instruction and the hierarchically structured machinery of "top-down"

centralized instruction, adding that "the conflict between the two systems has serious consequences for methods of instruction, evaluation of students' progress, and the way the teacher and student roles are played" (Husen, 1979, pp. 125).

In light of contradictory practical implications derived from the different educational orientations addressed by the centralized and decentralized curricular approaches, it is not surprising that many cases of failure in attempts to combine these orientations under the umbrella of one school curriculum structure have been reported (Kliebard, 1988; Strotnik,1988).

Therefore, the intention to combine centralized and decentralized curricular approaches representing contradictory educational orientations in the autonomous schools, which on face level appears to be an attractive alternative, is not simple to realize in actual practice.

In the present paper, findings from three case studies of curriculum making in three autonomous primary schools in Israel will be presented. We shall confine ourselves to only one facet of curriculum making, namely the School Curriculum Structure which illustrates the way in which those schools resolve the tensions arising from their dedication to actualize school, teacher and pupil autonomy while at the same time trying to comply with the requirements of the national curricula.

In reporting and discussing the findings we shall relate to the following questions:

- Do the investigated schools succeed in combining the two curricular approaches in their school curriculum structure?
- If so, how do they aproach this challenge?
- What are the main conditions which appear to sustain their specific school curriculum structure?

## Methodology

The investigation was carried out as a series of Topic Oriented case studies (Spradley, 1980), exploring the following aspects of curriculum making in the three investigated schools: the schools' educational platform, curriculum structure, organizational structure, social climate, the role of the principal and curriculum consultant in curriculum making and the school/ parent/community relationship. Qualitative methods were used (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Skilled non-participant observers spent one academic year observing and recording curriculum planning activities at the global school planning level, the age grade level and the individual teacher planning activity level. The schools' relevant written documents were analyzed and field notes were occasionally recorded. Semi-structured interviews with the

principal and other key members of the staff were carried out, and a questionnaire was administered to all teachers. The findings were reported in three separate reports. These included ethnographic descriptions and interpretations, some quantitative data processing and descriptive statistics. (See bibliography: Ezer, H. , M.A. Thesis, 1986; Shoshani, N. , M.A. Thesis, 1987; and Gal, O. ,M.A. Thesis, 1989. )

The findings reported in this paper, as mentioned above, relate to the School Curriculum Structure aspect and are based on the three separate, detailed, original reports.

Basic data on the studied schools

School A. Primary school with grades1-6, located in a small city in the densely populated central region of the country. Twenty-seven classes with 41 teachers and about 800 pupils, mainly from middle class homes. About 20% of the pupils were defined as slow learners and 10% of them needed some form of special education. The principal, a quiet leader, is aided by an on-site curriculum coordinator with whom she cooperates closely.

School B. Primary school with 1-8 grades, located in a city near Tel-Aviv. Twenty classes with 30 teachers and about 500 pupils from low and middle class socio-economic background. About 30% of the pupils were defined as slow learners. The principal, a charismatic leader with a drive for change, is advised by an external curriculum coordinator.

School C. Primary school with 1-6 grades, located in a village near Tel-Aviv. Twenty-two classes with 36 teachers and about 620 pupils mainly from middle class socio-economic background. The school is specifically known to be involved in community life. The principal, a charismatic leader, has received one year of special training in School Based Curriculum Development at one of the universities, and thus performs the role of curriculum coordinator herself..

**Findings**

The School Curriculum Structure

One of the most obvious features of the School Curriculum Structure in the studied schools is a combination of programs produced by professional bodies external to the school, together with self-made and locally produced programs. In all three cases we found a common pattern in the structuring of the school curriculum. Four main components were discernable in the schools' timetable: 1) The Basic Skills Subject component, comprising Hebrew Language (including writing and reading comprehension), Mathematics and English. Roughly half of the weekly periods are devoted to these subjects. 2) The Separate Subjects component comprising Natural Sciences, Bible Study, Literature, History, Geography, and Arts and Crafts. These subjects constitute about one third of the timetable and are usually taught individually, each

occupying a fixed slot in the timetable. 3) The Integrated Topics component, comprising different subjects, mainly in the field of social and environmental studies, often including selected topics from the Separate Subjects, but taught in an integrated way. The scope of the Integrated Subjects component is wide, covering many fields of study and areas of experience, and it relates to all the age levels and grades. 4) The Additional Programs component, comprising Enrichment programs, Interest Group programs, Individual Pupil projects, Peer Guided programs, and other programs which are mostly classroom initiated and confined to grade levels. The last two components constitute nearly 20% of the timetable. While the Integrated Subjects are always included in the formal timetable, some of the additional programs are extracurricular activities which take place after formal school time.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Dividing the timetable into four components is not for formal convenience alone: it reflects a genuine effort to resolve the conflicts resulting from trying to implement two contradictory educational orientations which require different curriculum paradigms (Schubert, 1986).

Implementing national programs which are mostly academic/intellectual or social/national in orientation, to use Goodlad's terms (1984), and which are externally produced, requires quite a different approach, and makes different demands on the teachers, than developing and implementing local programs which are mostly individual-oriented, pupil centered and self-produced. The decision to structure the School Curriculum in line with the four components resulted in four distinct frameworks in which different curricular approaches might be exercised. To reveal the different approaches, we analyzed each component in the School Curriculum of the three schools, using a list of key concepts commonly used in describing curricular characteristics. The following key concepts were included in our analytical scheme: Syllabus, Curriculum Materials, Instructional Planning, Integration, Organizing Elements, Time Allocation, Learning Assessment, Teacher Participation, Pupil Participation and Parent Participation. (For our definitions of these concepts, see Appendix.)

In the following sections we describe each of the four components of the School Curriculum using the above-mentioned concepts to describe their specific features and characteristics. Where no reference is made to one particular school, the description represents common findings for all three of them.

## Basic Skills Subjects

The mode in which the studied schools define their attitude toward the basic skills subjects vividly illustrates their general tendency to assimilate and internalize heterogeneous

decisions in curriculum making into their own autonomously defined educational platform. In these schools, compliance with the requirements of the national curriculum in Hebrew Language, Mathematics, and English is not primarily regarded as something which has to do with responding to a national or a societal need. Rather, it is regarded as an essential part of furthering individual pupils' personal development. Teachers view reading comprehension skills, writing skills, oral expression skills, computing skills, as well as foreign language skills (which eventually have the potential to open new cultural and social vistas) - as basic and necessary to the process of educating pupils by providing them with the ground for self-directed and further personal development. As to why study programs in these subjects should be externally prepared, the common position of the teachers is that deciding curricular matters in these subjects requires a certain amount of expertise which they assume is possessed by subject matter specialists who are relatively more competent in their specific field of knowledge than are the teachers in general. By adopting this attitude, the school staff transforms external claims into their own by incorporating them into the school's educational platform and supporting their validity with arguments pertinent to their own educational philosophy. This is a good example of the autonomous school as a self-directed unit, an idea which guides its educational philosophy and which presupposes the utilization of internal or external resources provided that in either case the school is acting consciously and intentionally.

Syllabus: In the Basic Skills Subjects there are compulsive, centrally prepared national syllabi which set a common framework for all the schools in the national educational system and specify an important part of the core subjects to be learned by all pupils. Since there is a supposed inner logic to the recommended course of study, teachers are expected to follow it faithfully. They prepare their instructional plans according to the suggested contents, following the sequences in which these have to be taught in keeping with the prescribed time allocations, while striving to achieve minimum requirements in pupil achievement specified to grade levels.

A typical principal's attitude is: "The contents of the Basic Skills Subjects are sequential and very structured. They were planned by Subject-Matter specialists, competent in their fields. Deviation from their recommendations will violate the whole structure. That is why we faithfully implement the formal curriculum" (Principal, School B, Interview 5). As a consequence of this attitude and of the willingness to achieve the specified attainment targets, School B introduced a practice of streaming the pupils in the upper grades (grades 7-8) into two or three levels of learning abilities. Sometimes mixing pupils from different grade levels but of similar abilities is also practised.

Curriculum Materials: The common practice is to use externally prepared curriculum materials produced by professional bodies or authors. The materials are chosen through a process of collegial discussion among the members of the grade level team, or by individual teachers advised by the principal or the curriculum consultant. They are chosen out of a pool of materials authorized by the Ministry of Education. Sometimes teachers produce worksheets, cards and other small supplementary materials, in order to adapt the materials to individualized instruction. In School C, for instance, teachers prepared enrichment materials as well as cards and worksheets to individualize curriculum materials in English.

Instructional Planning: The teachers' main task is to devise ways to cater to differences among pupils while trying to motivate and get them to accomplish the common learning tasks. In School C, a battery of diagnostic tests in language skills was implemented. Great variance in pupils' knowledge of language skills was revealed. This reinforced the argument in favor of individualising the learning process - allowing pupils to progress according to their own pace and letting teachers try to adapt instruction to different levels of pupil abilities.

Teachers concern themselves with vertical planning issues within the framework of the year course, as well as with coordinating instructional plans between the grade levels. Teacher autonomy is expressed mainly in decisions about the mode of presentation of the ready-made curriculum materials and they enjoy quite a lot of freedom planning the details of pupils' learning activities. Frontal teaching of the whole class (sometimes streamed, as in School B) as well as individualized pupil work are common. Not many group learning settings were observed in this part of the curriculum. There is a tendency in all three investigated schools to institutionalize the role of the specialized teacher in Hebrew Language, Mathematics and English. Specialized teachers are supposed to function as team leaders and they provide resources and assistance to the other teachers. Whereas the general teachers get some in-service training in the basic skills field of knowledge, the specialized teachers receive special training and have an acknowledged expert status in the teachers staff room. It is interesting to note that institutionalizing this kind of specialist teacher role by securing special training for selected general teachers, is one of the Goodlad 's suggestions for improving the actual practices in schooling (Goodlad, 1984).

Integration: Since the Basic Skills Subjects are regarded as having well defined structures of their disciplines, neither intents nor practices of integration were observed.

Organizing Elements: In preparing their instructional plans, teachers keep faithfully to skill-developing schemes outlined in the syllabi and frequently elaborated in the ready-made curriculum materials.

Time Allocation: The allocated time is always in compliance with the central authorities' requirements. No case was recorded in which a school allotted less than the required time. On the contrary, sometimes they exceeded the required time.

Learning Assessment: Much effort in collective discussions and staff meetings is devoted to deliberating about ways to follow-up, control, assess and measure pupil achievement. Occasionally, national or regional standardized tests and survey instruments are used but mostly internally initiated methods and instruments are implemented and administered either to the entire school, or to the grade level, or within the individual classes.

Teacher Participation: Teachers' active participation in curriculum making is quite limited. Since following the outlines of the syllabi and using ready-made curriculum material suggestions is a legitimate line of action, teachers feel they have to concentrate their efforts on comprehending the underlying logic of these externally produced materials, and interpret them properly. Since externally produced materials, by definition, are generic in their form, while instructional planning is always contextual, teachers feel they have the freedom and the duty to adapt these materials by considering local and personal considerations. Though this kind of attitude to teacher participation evokes images of a performing or a consumer teacher, it still seems to be in accordance with the notion of autonomy and the idea of self-direction.

Pupil Participation: Pupils are not involved in choosing either the contents, the learning materials, or the learning activities and methods. Their active participation is sometimes exercised by being delegated self-responsibility in accomplishing the learning tasks according to the instruction; however, self-checking sheets are seldom used. In School B, pupils may choose to extend their knowledge by participating in additional enrichment programs.

Parent Participation: Parents are kept informed about what the pupils learn. They are not partners in curricular decision making. They are called on to finance enrichment programs which mainly provide new equipment for computerized instruction. School B initiated a teacher-parent workshop for preparing the parents to assist their children in doing their homework.

## Separate Subjects

Syllabus: In Natural Sciences, Literature, Bible Study, History, Geography, and Arts and Crafts subjects, prescribed national syllabi exist. Teachers regard them as flexible documents which supply frameworks for instructional planning. Teachers also recognize that most of these subjects, and perhaps all of them, have a certain distinct structure in terms of substantive concepts and specific syntax. Hence teachers would agree that they have to be studied as separate subjects, but they believe that it is possible and even desirable to detach

certain topics and contents from the compartmentalized subjects which are taught according to discipline, and integrate these with topics and content from other subjects. Hence, teachers interpret these syllabi more flexibly than the syllabi of the Basic Skills Subjects, in terms of possible selection of contents, sequence, partial integration in teaching and attitude to time allocation. This attitude found typical expression in the words of the principal of School A: "It is the duty of the teacher in the classroom to decide about the matter of time allocation. S/He has to consider whether the required substantive ideas in Bible Study have already been mastered by her/his pupils in spite of the fact that some chapters and contents have not yet been covered by instruction. This may never occur in Mathematics or English, which we consider to be very structured and sequential" (Principal, School A, Interview).

Arts and Crafts Subjects are frequently integrated in school social events and special occasions such as festivals, ceremonies, etc. In School B, a team of teachers assisted by an external consultant reviewed the Natural Science Syllabus in light of the school educational platform, and performed a needs assessment survey asking parents and pupils about their expectations. As a result they found the formal syllabus unsuitable. Hence, new content was added to the suggested course of study, while other content was dropped, and still other topics were given more emphasis to match parent and pupil expectations.

Curriculum Materials: Usually external ready-made curriculum materials are used as main resources in instructional planning. Yet teachers also prepare supplementary materials in the form of worksheets, cards, educational games, socio-drama activities, etc. There is much cooperative work involving teachers at the grade level in preparing these materials.

Instructional Planning: Teachers are expected to manifest a considerable degree of autonomy in preparing their instructional plans. The principal of School C expressed a common attitude by saying: "The key point is that we don't teach textbooks. Rather, we learn to read the conceptual scheme of the subject to be taught according to the syllabus, and then we make our choices, adaptations and modifications while using curriculum materials and preparing instructional plans." (Principal School C, Interview 2).

The principal of School A added that she expected teachers to apply criteria of relevancy, including pupils' interests, community life realities and implications of pupils' out of school life, while preparing instructional plans in Literature, Bible Study and History. It is quite clear that the envisaged role of the teacher in the context of teaching the separate subjects is that of the teacher following the "autonomous consumer track" (Silberstein, 1987). McCutcheon (1988) refers to this role as the deliberative teacher perspective in which the teacher identifies curricular problems, reformulates them and suggests proper adaptations, taking into account personal and local considerations.

Classroom and cooperative group learning are the dominant strategies in teaching the separate subjects. Much effort is spent in organizing and managing cooperative group work which alternates with classroom discussions and summing-up sessions leading to common shared knowledge by all the pupils.

Integration: The subjects are usually taught separately at a fixed time. Selected topics and contents are occasionally incorporated in integrative Topics.

Organizing Elements: Mainly substantive ideas and major concepts outlined in the syllabi.

Time Allocation: Flexible, internally decided and often less than recommended by central authorities.

Learning Assessment: Teacher initiated follow-up and classroom administered assessment. No minimum requirements were set up.

Teacher Participation: Teachers enjoy much greater autonomy in curriculum making than they do in Basic Skills Subjects. Teachers engage in active decision making processes by initiating adequate ways to motivate the pupils and render the ready-made curriculum materials accessible for the pupils, as they do in the Basic Skills Subjects. In the Separate Subjects they also exercise a great degree of freedom in selecting contents, choosing and suggesting sequences, deciding which resource materials to use, and devising learning environments based on cooperative group learning settings which are frequently supplied by self-prepared teaching materials.

Pupil Participation: There is little active pupil participation in selecting contents; participation takes place mainly in optional enrichment materials if there are such. There is much willingness to make pupils responsible for their own learning.

Parent Participation: Parents are informed about their childrens' learning. There is no active parent involvement in curriculum making affairs, except for occasions on which parents are invited to lecture on specialized topics.

## Integrated Topics

The third component in the School Curriculum Structure comprises a variety of topics mainly in environmental and social studies. Some of these topics relate to the community, while some are connected with wider social and national issues. In each of the investigated schools we found at least one integrated topic planned vertically and taught on a regular time basis in all the grades. We also found additional integrated topics occasionally taught on a smaller scale, sometimes confined to only one grade level.

Syllabus: Self-prepared by school teams. A written document, sometimes in very modest form, including the course of the study of the integrated topic, its educational goals, specific contents to be taught, and suggested sequences coordinated among the grade levels, etc.

Curriculum Materials: Teachers develop new curriculum materials utilizing a variety of first hand resources such as textbooks, encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, etc. They also select and rewrite existing curriculum materials. To promote the effective re-use of the accumulated, new materials, all three schools set-up "Pedagogical Laboratories" which function as clearing houses, classifying and filing accumulated material.

Instructional Planning: Free of possible restrictions imposed by ready-made syllabi or ready-made curriculum materials, teachers exercise full freedom in planning pupil learning activities, using their professional experience and knowledge, and guided by their own pedagogical sensibility. Individualized learning is much practiced, mainly by setting up "learning centers", which focus on motivating pupils' interest by presenting challenging learning tasks and by exploring multi-media stimulations. Besides the classroom, school common spaces, facilities, and arts and crafts rooms serve as learning environment. Occasionally, out-of-school activities such as visits to community institutions are organized. Cooperative group work is very common.

Integration: The topics are fully integrated in their planning and implementation. The scope and intensity of integration may vary. Content deriving from Literature, Hebrew Language, Bible Study, History and Geography are integrated with content pertaining to Social and Environmental Studies.

Organizing Elements: This part of the School Curriculum is assumed to be responsive to pupil interests and local needs. Therefore issues and problems were found to be the most common organizing elements. For instance, in School A, teachers talked about "pupils' existential problems" as the most desirable vehicle to start with and to organize as a developing topic. So, when teaching the topic of family life, instead of using descriptive titles, they decided to call the topic "How am I coping with problems and conflicts in my family?" thus hinting at the issue which was to become the guiding and organizing element in developing the topic. Note the specific emphasis put deliberately on the words coping, problems, conflicts and my. The viewpoint of a pupil with existential problems of here and now, having conflicts with parents, siblings, etc. was chosen as a guiding and organizing element in developing the topic.

However, while an existential problem which might be psychologically justified serves as an organizing element in a unit to be learned in the course of the year, when it comes to the question of selecting an organizing element in planning the integrative subject vertically for all age grades, then substantive ideas or major concepts might be preferred. For instance, in

School A, the three major concepts of diversity, mutual relationship and personal involvement served as elements organizing the integrative social-studies for all age grades.

Learning Assessment: No formal provision for assessing pupil achievement was observed. Teachers keep track of pupils' progress on a non-formal basis and generally they invest more in the learning processes as such, than in looking for the learning outcomes.

Teacher Participation: By developing and implementing self-produced programs, teachers are involved in full scale curriculum making experiences. They have to develop the conceptual scheme of the topic by deliberating about the goals to be attained, contents to be selected, concepts and ideas to be emphasized, sequences to be followed, issues of vertical planning, issues of lateral coordination with other subjects taught, questions of follow-up and evaluation, and so on. They must also consider organizational and managerial problems in implementing the topic, and have to engage in preparing curriculum classroom activities. The whole range of decision-making processes as well as actual curriculum making practices are well within the scope of the teachers engaged in developing Integrative Topics. Of course, part of the job is performed on a collegial basis by school or by grade level teams. Nevertheless, each individual teacher has the chance to participate in some way and with some degree of involvement in the entire process of curriculum making.

This is the kind of curriculum making which some scholars have defined as School Based Curriculum Development (Sabar, 1989).

In all the three schools, teachers were enthusiastic about having the chance to develop their own curriculum. In response to a questionnaire, 94% of the teachers in School C rated their activity in developing an integrative topic as "very important", supporting their opinion with three different rationales:

a. Integrative topics are best fitted to respond to pupils needs.
b. Curriculum develoment gives teachers the opportunity to realize and express their creative potential.
c. These topics are best fitted to respond to local needs, arising from the immediate physical and human environment of the school.

Pupil Participation: Teachers tend to involve pupils in planning the topic. Pupils suggest activities in which they are interested. Pupils have freedom to choose the place in which they wish to work, partners to work with, ways of learning and also determine goals to be achieved. Often they bring materials from home to assist their learning.

Parent Participation: There is a policy of involving parents in developing integrative topics. In School C, for instance, parents suggested to develop the topic of "How to become a wise consumer". In School B, parents were involved in suggesting topics to be developed in

Natural Sciences. Parents also participate by giving lectures and occasionally help to organize outdoor activities.

## Additional Programs

In the school curriculum of each of the investigated schools, various additional programs, initiated either by the teachers, the pupils or the parents, are included. Some appear in the formal timetable, while others are extra-curricular programs implemented after school time. The main purpose of these programs is to provide opportunities to satisfy a diversity of pupils' interests, personal curiosities and inclinations.

In School C, a one period daily is devoted to a Social Activity program. It takes place in a grade level assembly arrangement twice weekly, and on other days of the week it takes place in the classroom. Current events, community concerns, pupils' hobbies and interests, etc., are on the agenda and the pupils are responsible for carrying out the program. In School B, teachers initiated "Group Interest" programs in a variety of subjects, including some esoteric topics which reflect the special interests of the teachers. Pupils decide whether or not to participate in these programs which are organized in non-graded group settings. School B also implements a "Peer-Guided" program in which pupils of the upper grades (grades 7-8) guide, in a pair setting and on a one period weekly basis, pupils from grades 1-2 in topics chosen by the lower grades. In addition, school B participates in a joint "Inter-School Activity" program in which several schools in the region cooperate in implementing outdoor, environmental topics. School A has an "Occasional Subject" framework in which two periods weekly are devoted to teacher chosen or pupil suggested occasional and contextual topics. In all these programs, pupils are actively involved, and usually their parents are, as well. A comprehensive and synoptic view of the main features of the four components in the Curriculum Structure of the investigated schools is presented in Tables 2 and 8.

Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The Curriculum Structure of the investigated schools, as presented above (Tables 2 and 3), manifests a genuine effort to combine contradictory educational orientations and curricular approaches under the umbrella of the School Curriculum Structure. Teachers fulfill many different roles in curriculum making, depending on the particular curriculum component involved. Following the attributes of the four components described in Tables 2 and 3 we can clearly recognize patterns of different educational orientation and different curriculum making approaches involving different profiles of teacher behavior. Focusing on

the Basic Skills subjects and Separate subjects, we encounter more heteronomous behavior on the part of the teachers in a type of academic/intellectual educational orientation, while progressing to Integrated topics and Additional Programs, more autonomous teacher behavior within the framework of a more pupil-oriented educational philosophy is manifested. Likewise, going toward the Basic Skills and the Separate subjects, more centralized curriculum development processes with teachers assuming consumer roles are apparent, while progressing to the Integrative Topic and the Additional Programs, more local curriculum developments with teachers assuming developer roles, are evident.

This multi-faceted Curriculum Structure to which we shall return later, aims to resolve a long-standing curricular controversy which touches on what we shall call the two "pitfalls" in the history of curriculum development, which curriculum experts around the world accounted as failures in reconciling the inherent conflicts arising from an attempt to implement contradictory educational orientations in the School Curriculum Structure.

## The Two Curricular "Pitfalls"

The first curricular "pitfall" refers to the "pendulum" phenomenon which has troubled the educational scene in many parts of the world (to mention just a few, Connelly, 1972; Schwab, 1983; Sabar, 1987). In the history of curriculum development, new curricular reforms of one or another educational orientation, have periodically gained primacy and become dominant. A subject-matter orientation, was replaced by a social orientation and this in turn was replaced by a pupil-centered orientation. Fashionable currents in educational thought have moved back and forth throughout the history of curriculum development, negating previous orientations and suggesting new ones (Kliebard, 1988).

Each orientation, of course, implies appropriate curricular decision making processes involving a certain image of teacher and pupil roles. Thus the disclosed manifestation of the pendulum phenomenon is the successive replacement of different curricular approaches (See House 1986, Eden, et al. 1987 and others).

However, the "pendulum" phenomenon has not always appeared in this chronological order, sweeping away established orientations and giving rise to new ones. The different educational orientations and the different curricular approaches could also coexist, synchronically, in different institutions with different perceptions of schooling.

As Kliebard puts it: "Each doctrine had an appeal and a constituency" (Kliebard, 1988, p. 30). In England, the United States, Israel and elsewhere, "open-integrative schools" coexisted side by side with the predominantly traditional schools of quite different educational orientation and curricular approaches. It may well be argued that establishing two kind of schools based on different educational orientations is a desired situation since it allows free

choice for parents and pupils. Indeed research findings support the claim that different pupils may benefit differently from learning settings which are typical of one or the other orientation (Eggelston, 1977). But, just because each doctrine or educational orientation has an appeal of its own and it purports potential benefits for different students, why not suggest possible combinations of both in the curriculum structure of the same institution? Indeed, Kliebard , describing the educational scene found in the USA in the 80's states that "rather than make a particular ideological choice among apparently contradictory curriculum directions, it was perhaps more politically expedient on the part of practical school administrators to make a potpourri of all of them" (Kliebard, 1988, p. 30).

There is nothing intrinsically wrong in articulating the aspirations to bring together the virtues of both orientations, but empirical research findings prove again and again that the actual realization of these aspirations is quite difficult. Hence, failure to accomplish these aspirations as reported in the literature is what we regard as the second curricular "pitfall". This "pitfall" is what we call the "gap pitfall", or perhaps more decisively the "curricular double language pitfall", suggesting an abusive element rather than an innocent incidentally occurring gap. Goodlad (1984), reporting on the comprehensive research in which he analyzed educational goals of primary and secondary schools, states that all the ideological expectations of the different educational orientations found their place in the definition of school goals. Schools' common goals were related to academic/intellectual, career/vocational, social, as well as to personal functions of schooling. But having observed the actual practices, the operational curriculum in the school, Goodlad concludes "we are not without goals for schooling. But we are lacking an articulation of them and commitment to them" (Goodlad 1984, p. 56). Sirotnik (1988) reports on similar findings. Referring to Goodlad's study and to his own, Sirotnik concludes that in reality schools manifest an educational rhetoric vis-a-vis the educational practice and if the goal statements of the formal curriculum were defined by the actual operational curriculum, it would then read very differently from the goals stated in the official documents of those schools.

Gipps (1988) quoting a report of the HMI commission visiting in Germany, tells us that German primary school teachers, when asked whether they encourage and accept originality and individuality in their pupils work, responded positively. But, checking the pupils' written work, little evidence of either originality or individuality was actually found. Thus it seems that solid, empirical evidence supports our assertion about the second curricular "pitfall". We don't have findings concerning the actual situation within traditional primary schools in the Israeli educational system, but we may suspect with a considerable degree of confidence, that should a research design similar to Goodlad's be conducted, it would result in similar findings. Most schools would probably express on the level of espoused theory (see Schön (1983) in

relation to the individual practitioner), adherence to the socially desired educational goals derived from the various ideologies, while on the "theory in action" level (Schön, ibid.), i.e. , the school curriculum real structure and its form of implementation, the picture would probably be quite different.

The most promising contribution to educational thought and practice seems to be the moral we draw from our studied cases, which represent a growing number of autonomous primary schools in Israel. The School Curriculum Structure of these schools presents a genuine effort to avoid both curricular "pitfalls" which have afflicted schools in the past, and still continue to afflict them.

The main contribution of the presented School Curriculum Structure is in formalizing the curriculum structure into four distinct curriculum components. Each component bears upon a different blend of curricular characteristics, defined by key curricular concepts which served as an analytical scheme and were instrumental in identifying curricular characteristics derived from different educational orientations and ideologies. Two underlying reasons may contribute to the success of this structure, one practical and the other psychological. The formalized division into four curriculum components, which provides proper time allocation and resources for each, prevents the pressure of the so-called hard core subjects on the so-called soft subjects in the school curriculum.

It seems that there is never enough time allocated in the school timetable to fully accomplish the national curriculum requirements in Mathematics, Languages and the other hard core subjects. Hence the frequent pressure exerted for the so-called soft parts of the school curriculum to be reduced or even omitted from the school curriculum. By securing a legitimate and distinct framework in the school curriculum structure for the Integrative Topics and for the Additional Programs component and by allotting them proper time and other resources, these pressures disappear. Rendering at least part of the so-called Separate Subjects flexible, and reconsidering time allocations suggested by central authorities also alleviates possible pressure exercised on the so-called soft subjects.

The underlying psychological reason contributing to the eventual success of this curriculum structure, is the legitimation of contextual norms of teachers' behaviors. Instead of the commonly found typology regarding the perception of teachers' roles in curriculum affairs, the curriculum structure in these schools gives legitimacy to a nexus of teacher images ranging from that of a quite faithful interpreter of an externally prepared curriculum exercising limited autonomy, to that of a genuine school based curriculum developer exercising full autonomy. The different ideological value judgments, the different weights attached to different curricular considerations, and the adoption of different curricular approaches for the different components of the school curriculum, don't seem to inconvenience the teachers in

these schools. On the contrary, they feel that the different perceived roles and the different behavioral expectations, in the context of different curriculum components, are congruent with the school educational platform, and promote their professional status. Insofar as performing different roles in curriculum making proves to be congruent with the idea of self-directed behavior, (Skager, 1984) teacher autonomy remains intact. The idea of self-direction applies to the school as an autonomous entity as well. Many external and internal resources provided input ingredients into the school curriculum structure of these schools, but they were always processed by applying the screen of the self-directing idea.

Summing up the conditions which seem to be necessary to sustain the specific curriculum structure in the investigated schools , a few concluding remarks seem to be appropriate.

To sustain the specific curiculum structure in these schools, there has to be a common educational philosophy shared by the school staff as well as by the central authorities responsible for the national curriculum. Two ideas form the cornerstone of this philosophy: 1) The idea of the school as a self-directed entity in curricular affairs, meaning that the school utilizes both internal and external curriculum resources to achieve educational goals which were defined or redefined by the school itself in accordance with the national curriculum goals. Thus, the school is neither an institution which implements compulsive national curriculum, nor is it a self-contained autarkish kind of institution. 2) The idea of conceiving of the national curriculum as a supportive system rather than a cohersive one. It is supposed to provide guidelines for teachers, resource materials, model instructional materials, different teacher training services and so on, rather than imposing requirements toward standardization and uniform achievement.

A second aspect which we have already discussed states that institutionalizing four curriculum components in the school curriculum time table and thus avoiding undesired pressures of the so-called hard subjects on the so-called soft subjects, is evidently also a necessary condition. The third aspect is connected to establishing a school ethos in which different curricular approaches legitimately coexist and the teachers willingly assume different roles and norms of behavior depending on the context of the curriculum component. Finally, to make planning and implementing the school curriculum structure workable, the school has to operate an appropriate organizing structure, and a supportive social-climate. Lastly but not less important, the principal himself was found to be a key figure in defining the actual shape of the curriculum structure as well as in implementation of staff-developing processes to assure efficient staff involvement in making the curriculum structure operative.

**Appendix**

Syllabus: A written document, specifying the course of study of a program in terms of suggested contents, proposed sequences, time allocations, listing minimum requirements and also outlining a conceptual scheme of the program in terms of general educational goals, the perceived nature of the discipline or the subject, suggested teaching-learning strategies, perception of pupil development, expectation of teacher role in implementing the program, etc.

Curriculum Materials: Materials and teaching-learning aids, either written or devised in some other way, such as audiovisuals, educational games, materials and apparatus for experimentation, etc. These are designed either for pupil or for teacher usage and their explicit purpose is to put the study program in operation.

Instructional Planning: The process in which teachers plan and construct learning environments, classroom learning activities, including teachers' various pre-active behaviors in planning the lessons.

Integration: This concept refers to possible lateral relationships among subjects, integrating contents and learning activities deriving from different fields of study and areas of experience.

Organizing Element: This concept is conceived as a Tylerian concept (Tyler, 1949), adopting the classical definition of a curricular element which may be a major concept, an idea, a skill, a value, an issue or a problem to be solved which serves to organize the different parts of the program, turning them into a purposeful and coordinated whole.

Time Allocation: The mode of time allocation, whether flexible or fixed, in compliance with external requirements, or autonomously decided.

Learning Assessment: Assessment of pupil learning , follow-up and achievement measurement.

Teacher Participation: Teacher involvement in school and classroom curriculum making , his expected autonomy and role in curricular affairs.

Pupil Participation: Pupil involvement and participation in curriculum making, planning, choosing and performing in learning tasks.

Parent Participation: Parent involvement in planning, implementing and following-up the school curriculum.

## Bibliography


Caspi, M., (1985) *Active learning toward the second decade: Its development* (Jerusalem: The Ministry of Education and Culture)(Hebrew).

Caspi , M. and R. Har-Zion (1985) *The active school: A model of a realistic and balanced autonomic process* (Jerusalem: The Ministry of Education and Culture).

Connelly, F.M. (1972) The function of curriculum development. *Interchange* , 3, 2-3: 161-171.

Eden, S. Mozes, S. and R. Amiad (1987) Multi-track curriculum planning. In N. Sabar, J. Rudduck and W.R. Reid (eds) *Partnership & autonomy in SBCD*, (Sheffield, Division of Education, University of Sheffield), 37-40.

Eggelston, J. (1977) *The ecology of the school* (London: Methuen).

Ezer, H. (1986) *School based curriculum development - A case study.* M.A. Thesis (School of Education, Tel Aviv University) (Hebrew).

Friedman, I. (1987) *Autonomy in education: Conceptual Frames and Execution Processes* (Henriette Szold Institute ) (Hebrew).

Gal, O. (1989) *School based curriculum development in an autonomic community school - A case study.* M.A. Thesis (School of Education, Tel Aviv University) (Hebrew).

Gipps, C. (1988) What exams would mean for primary education. In D. Lawton and C. Chitty (eds) *The national curriculum* (Bedford Way Papers/33, Institute of Education, University of London).

Goodlad, J.I. (1984) *A place called school: Prospects for the future* (New York: McGraw-Hill).

Gordon, D. (1987) Autonomy is more than just the absence of external constraints. In N. Sabar, J. Rudduck, W.R. Reid (eds) *Partnership & autonomy in SBCD* (Sheffield, Division of Education, University of Sheffield), 29-36.

Guba, E.G. and Y. Lincoln (1981) *Effective evaluation* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass Inc. Pub.).

Harison, J. and R. Globman (1982) Open education in three societies. *Comparative Education Review, 26* , 3: 352-373.

House, E.R. (1986) *New directions in educational evaluation* (London: Farmer Press).

Husen, T. (1979) *The school in question: A comparative study of the school and its future in western societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Kliebard, H.M. (1988) The effort to reconstruct the modern American curriculum, in L.E. Beyer & M.W. Apple (eds) *The curriculum: Problems, politics and possibilities* (New York: State University of New York Press), 19-31.

McCutcheon, G. (1988) Curriculum and the work of teachers. In L.E. Beyer & M.W. Apple (eds) *The curriculum: Problems, politics and possibilities* (New York: State University of New York Press), 191-203.

Nevo, D. (1989) *Writing in elementary school: Process, achievement, attitudes: A report* (Tel-Aviv: The Ministry of Education and Culture; Tel-Aviv University).

Report of the Special Group of the Pedagogical Secretariate of the Ministry of Education (1984).

Sabar, N. (1987) School based curriculum development: The pendulum swings. In N. Sabar, J. Rudduck, W.R. Reid (eds) *Partnership & autonomy in SBCD* (Sheffield: Division of Education, University of Sheffield), 1-4.

Sabar, N. (1989) School based curriculum development. In T.Husen & T.N. Postlehwaite (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Education*, Supplementary 1 (Oxford: Pergamon Press. Ltd).

Sarason, S.B. (1982) *The culture of the school and the problem of change* (2nd edition) (Boston: Allyn & Bacon).

Schwab, J.J. (1984) The practical 4: Something for curriculum professors to do. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *13*, 3: 239-265.

Schön, D.A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner* (New York: Basic Books).

Shoshani, N. (1987) *School based curriculum development in an autonomous school - A case study*. M.A. thesis (Tel Aviv University ) (Hebrew).

Shubert, W.H. (1984) *Curriculum books: The first eighty years* (Langham, New York: University Press of America).

Shubert, W.H. (1986) *Curriculum: Perspective, paradigm and possibility* (New York: MacMillan).

Silberstein, M. (1987) School-based curriculum development in Israeli elementary schools. In N. Sabar, J. Rudduck, W.R. Reid (eds) *Partnership & autonomy in SBCD* (Sheffield: Division of Education, University of Sheffield), 6-11.

Skager, R. (1984) *Organizing school to encourage self-direction in learners* (UNESCO Institute for Education, Oxford: Hamburg and Pergamon Press).

Spradley, J.P. (1980) *Participant observation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston).

Sirotnik, K.A. (1988) What goes on in the classroom? Is this the way we want it? In L.E. Beyer and M.W. Apple (eds.). *The curriculum: Problems, politics and possibilities* (New York: State University of New York Press), 56-74.

Tamir, P. (1986) Teachers' autonomy in a centrally developed and controlled curriculum: An Israeli view. *Scottish Educational Review 18*, 2: 86-92.

Tyler, R.W. (1949) *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

**Table 1: The basic common structure of the curriculum in the three schools**

| Component Programs | Basic Skills Subjects | Separate Subjects | Integrated Topics | Additional |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subjects and Topics | Hebrew Language<br>Mathematics<br>English | Natural Sciences<br>Bible Study<br>Literature<br>History<br>Geography<br>Arts and Crafts | Social and Environmental Studies, Selected Topics from the Separate Subjects | Various fields of study and areas of experience |
| Percentage of the Time-table | 40-50 | 30-35 | 15-30 | |

**Table 2: Main common features of the four components in the investigated schools' curriculum structure**

| | The Basic Skills Subjects | Separate Subjects | Integrated Topics | Additional Programs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Syllabus* | Ready-made, national and centrally prepared. | Ready-made, national and centrally prepared. | Originally devel. by local school team | -- |
| *Curriculum Materials* | Ready-made curriculum materials supplemented with teacher made materials mainly to individualize and to adapt for various cognitive and interest levels of the pupils. | Ready-made curriculum materials chosen and modified by teachers and supplemented by teacher prepared materials | Teacher prepared usually based on first hand resources and also on selected ready-made curriculum materials | Usually teacher and pupil prepared materials |
| *Instructional Planning* | Complies with syllabus intents and requirements. Much individualized and frontal classroom work, securing pupils' successful access to the curriculum materials. General teachers assisted by specialized teachers. | Syllabus serving in shaping the outline of the courses. Flexible interpretation of syllabus and ready made curriculum materials. Much cooperative group work of pupils and class discussions. | Diversified flexible ways of learning using multi-media learning centers, school common space facilities as well as out-of-school activities. | Diversified learning settings using occasional and contextual learning opportunities inside and outside of the school. Mostly pupil and teacher interest based. |
| *Integration* | None at all | Usually learned separately. Occasionally selected contents are integrated. | Always integrated. | Frequently integrated. |
| *Organizing Elements* | Recommended skill developmental sequences. | Substantive concepts and ideas of the subject. | Existential issues and problems relevant to pupils needs and interests. | |

---

Heteronomy, academic/intellectual orientation — Autonomy, pupil orientation

Centralized curriculum development — Peripheric/local curriculum development

Teachers assume consumer roles — Teachers assume developer roles

**Table 3: Main common features of the four components in the investigated schools' curriculum structure (continued)**

| | The Basic Skills Subjects | Separate Subjects | Integrated Topics | Additional Programs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Time Allocation* | Strictly in compliance with the requirements of central authorities. | Flexible, sometimes less than recommended by central authorities | Flexible and internally decided. | Flexible and internally decided. |
| *Learning Assessments* | Much dedication to evaluation of learning outcomes. School and also national or regional administered standard achievement tests. | Schools provided internal measures to assess learning outcomes. Usually classroom administered. | No clear indicators were observed. The merits of learning processes are more appreciated than the learning outcomes. | No specific provisions. |
| *Teacher Participation* | Little active involvement in curriculum making. Mainly designing ways to motivate pupils to learn and adapting materials to different cognitive levels of pupils. | Autonomous consumer position. Teachers localize and personalize existing materials in the framework of a flexible national syllabus. Site-specific curriculum making. | Genuine involvement in all kinds of curricular decision making and in all stages of curriculum making. | Active involvement in curriculum making together with other partners, mainly pupils and parents. |
| *Pupil Participation* | No pupil active involvement except some self-responsibility to attain the preplanned learning tasks. | Little pupil involvement in selecting contents and learning activities. | Pupils involved in selecting contents and activities. Much freedom exercised in the process of learning. Little participation in preparing of learning material | Pupils actively involved in planning and implementing programs |
| *Parent Participation* | Parents are informed. | Parents are informed and occasionally invited to lecture. | Parents involved in selecting contents, giving lectures, helping organize outdoor activities. | Occasionally involved in planning and implementing programs. |

---

Heteronomy, academic/intellectual orientation
Centralistic curriculum development
Teachers assume consumer roles

Autonomy, pupil orientation
Peripheric/local curriculum development
Teachers assume developer roles

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

Office of Education
Research and
Improvement (OERI)

ERIC

Date Filmed

March 29, 1991